

ASSOCIATION OF SENATES, SHOORA  
AND EQUIVALENT COUNCILS  
IN AFRICA AND THE ARAB WORLD



رابطة مجالس الشيوخ والشورى والمجالس  
المماثلة في أفريقيا والعالم العربي

ASSOCIATION DES SENATS, SHOORA ET CONSEILS  
EQUIVALENTS D'AFRIQUE ET DU MONDE ARABE

## **9<sup>TH</sup> RETREAT MEETING OF THE ASSECAA**

**FROM COVID 19 TO THE WAR IN UKRAINE : A GLOBAL SHOCK**

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## Introduction

Since the end of the Second World War in 1945, the earth globe had never been shaken until the years 2020 and 2022. At the end of that war, two blocks of winners were born. They became the leaders of the world giving themselves the right to veto for everything that was done in the world. These are the East block represented by one part of the allies with the USSR at the lead and the Western block of allies represented by the USA.

Two ideological blocks first at the political level but which will evolve also in economic blocks. It was capitalist liberalism and socialism mixed with a dose of communism.

These two blocks will become antagonistic blocks over the years until they fuel what they call "the Cold War".

As the world war had had repercussions outside the peoples which were involved in it, the cold war had had also repercussions beyond the frontiers of the two blocks.

If these peoples who were not directly involved in the world war have been at the battle field in a way or another, they took another attitude during the Cold war. Hence, some African and Asian countries created in Bandung what they called the "non aligned Movement".

*Brioni's declaration of July 19, 1956, proposed by Gamal Abdel Nasser, Josip Broz Tito, Soekarno and Jawaharlal, marks the origin of the movement, which then aimed, in the context of the Cold War, to protect itself from the influence of United States and the USSR who sought to rally the world to their cause (idea of bipolarization: the two big powers that govern the world). The term "non-alignment" was coined by Indian Prime Minister Nehru during a 1954 speech in Colombo (Wikipedia.org, 2022).*

The purpose of the organization as defined in the "Havana Declaration" of 1979 is to ensure "national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of non-aligned countries in their struggle against imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, segregation, racism, and all forms of foreign aggression, occupation, domination, interference or hegemony by great powers or political blocs" and to promote solidarity among the peoples of the Third World. The organization, whose headquarters are in Lusaka, Zambia, brings together nearly two-thirds of the members of the UN and 55% of the world's population.

That Cold War between the two powers ended in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall followed by the decomposition of the East bloc.

Since then, a unipolar world, policeman of the world has prevailed to the chagrin of both the

Eastern bloc and the non-aligned movement.

The “covid shock” and the war in Ukraine have come to show that the multipolar world is rising from its ashes.

This presentation, which analyzes the geopolitics around these two major events, is divided into two main parts:

- a) Theme I: The effects and repercussions of the coronavirus pandemic on Arab-African economies and the response of governments**
- b) Theme II: The Russian-Ukrainian war and its effects on supply chains, energy and food prices.**

On these two purely economic themes, it should be understood that they have their origins in politics. It is extremely important to tap into the political imagination to understand these crises. Economic domination would only be an illusion without a conception of politics that even involves other instruments of domination such as weapons.

## **FROM COVID 19 TO THE WAR IN UKRAINE: A GLOBAL SHOCK**

Our presentation will include two parts, namely the geopolitical context of Covid and the one of the war in Ukraine. Each section will try to outline and the solution approaches to be provided.

The presentation will end with a stack of recommendations so that African and Arab countries can strengthen their resilience capacity because conflicts or disasters are inevitable. Understanding the global political spectrum will help understanding the economic challenges related to the Covid 19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

### **1. COVID 19: A POLITICO-ECONOMIC PANDEMIC**

This health crisis which officially started in China has divided the planet earth. It provoked accusations between countries, speculations and other various reactions. But let us ask ourselves some questions to try to understand the ins and outs of this pandemic:

- a) COVID 19, is it a simple pandemic or a bacteriological weapon?
- b) Why does it officially break out in China?
- c) Were the barrier measures decided by the WHO effective at the global level?
- d) Why did each power seek to manufacture its own vaccine?
- e) etc.

At the end of 2019, clusters of pneumonia cases occurred in China, some of which were fatal. On January 9, 2020, the virus is identified, it is a new coronavirus called Sars-CoV-2 responsible for a **disease baptized "Covid-19" by the WHO** on February 11, 2020 to this **new infectious disease respiratory** disease that appeared in December 2019. This pandemic has fueled existing tensions between world powers. We will remember that in 2018, China had overtaken economically and for the first time, the United States.

This emergence of China could not help fueling tensions between the two world powers. Thus, Beijing implies that the Covid-19 would have first appeared on American territory and not in Wuhan. China has even come to say that the USA created this disease to stifle the ever-growing Chinese economy. There we already see the resurgence of the Blocs and the struggle for the multipolar world versus the unipolar world installed since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

This accusation is based on the hearing, on March 12, 2020, before the House of Representatives (equivalent to the National Assembly), of Robert Redfield, director of the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC in its original version). That day, the boss of this federal agency covering the entire American health system recognizes that due to an insufficient number of screening tests, some people who died of Covid-19 could not be identified as such. Their deaths were even attributed to the seasonal flu.

This declaration is notably relayed by the spokesman of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Lijian Zhao, on his Twitter account, and everything is carried away. “The director of the CDC recognizes that Americans declared dead from the flu have tested positive for the new coronavirus”, affirms the Chinese diplomat, thus estimating that cases of Covid-19 could therefore have preceded the first cases in China. “How old is the patient zero in the United States? How many people have been infected? [...] Be transparent! The United States owes us an explanation,” he said in his message (Le Parisien, 24/3/2020).



Lijian Zhao 赵立坚

[@zlj517](#)

2/2 CDC was caught on the spot. When did patient zero begin in US? How many people are infected? What are the names of the hospitals? It might be US army who brought the epidemic to Wuhan. Be transparent! Make public your data! US owe us an explanation!

The Parisian citing the statements of the Chinese continues to wonder: To support his accusation, China bases itself, in addition to the declaration of the director of the CDC, on the fact that deaths attributed to seasonal influenza could have been caused by Covid-19 (without even knowing when). But also on the fact that the Americans could have brought the Covid-19 with them directly to Wuhan during the Military World Games, at the end of October 2019.

### **Covid 19: a biological weapon?**

China suggests to everybody that this disease is nothing but a biological weapon to prevent this Eastern power from dominating the world economically. And as proof, China gives a disturbing element in its eyes: the holding of an event (“Event 201”) organized by the John Hopkins health security centre, in partnership with the World Economic Forum and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Produced on October 18, 2019 in New York, it simulated the arrival of a severe pandemic in order to illustrate the needs necessary to deal with the large-scale economic and social consequences.

So many factors which, according to Beijing, would prove that the Americans could be at the origin of the Covid-19. These innuendos and accusations come in a tense context between the two nations, particularly around trade battles. Strong resentment is also felt within the Chinese community across the Atlantic towards President Donald Trump and other political leaders who constantly refer to Covid-19 as a “Chinese virus”.

Where two elephants fight, it is rather the grass that suffers. Western and Eastern powers have reacted differently to this pandemic. Barrier measures have been adopted. The powers even wanted to impose them on developing countries. Among other measures, we can mention:

- Wearing masks,
- Containment,
- The covid test
- Preferably vaccines;
- etc.

Let us try to reflect on each of the measures taken by the powers or even the WHO.

#### **a) Wearing masks**

This measure has proven to be less practical in almost all African countries due to the socio-economic context of African and Arab countries, to name only the countries concerned here. Hold on, the Burundian population is 90% made up of farmers. How can a traditional farmer wear a mask in his field all day?? Impossible !!!! This is just one of many examples to show that this measure was difficult to apply. The context of the place of conception of this measure is very different from that of African and Arab countries. There, we do not add the “exorbitant” price for a peasant who has to buy them every day because most of the imported masks were for single use!!

#### **b) The Containment**

The populations living in these world powers used to be confined with winter. It is a kind of confinement imposed by climatic hazards. And as proof, most of these powers cultivate only six months out of twelve. The rest they consume what they have kept for themselves as well as for the cattle.

The advanced technology used especially at home, allows them to place orders being at home and to have them without difficulty.

Was it possible to apply this measure in Burundi, in Arab and African countries? In most African and Arab countries, we eat the food we seek on a daily basis. Ex: A Burundian farmer tells his wife to go and pound the cassava and he goes to catch fish, and that's day-to-day life. Here we are in regions where there are lakes. Elsewhere, they look for leaves of cassava, squash, beans that they are unable to keep. The trade system is not as developed in African and Arab countries to maintain trade in the context of confinement.

This is how Burundi and most African and Arab countries did not observe this confinement as a measure of simple logic.

### **c) The covid test**

The Covid test was a compulsory measure at the global level but it must be emphasized that it was a kind of fiasco in most African and Arab countries. The Burundi, like the populations of African countries and even some Arab countries, have not massively adhered to this policy because it is expensive. Not only is it not expensive, but also, people who do not travel abroad did not find the importance of being tested as long as they felt well.

If the test was free, you had to move distances and distances for this test. In addition to travel costs, you had to wear a mask which was “expensive” for some. Also the mentality of these populations did not easily accept this kind of test.

The test became compulsory for people who had to travel outside the country, but many Africans do not travel a lot.

Apart from these financial and logistical difficulties, Africans, Arabs and even elsewhere have not failed to wonder about this pandemic, sometimes even giving a more political than health connotation. God only knows that in difficult living conditions, conspiracy theories gain ground. People who do not know which saint to devote themselves to start looking for where their misfortune comes from. This is how the mutual accusations begin because, it is absolutely necessary to find a scapegoat. As much as the USA and China accuse each other, African and Arab countries have entered the dance for accusations that are more political than health.

According to the specialist Jérémie Peltier, director of studies at the Jean-Jaurès Foundation (April 1, 2020), the epidemic lends itself particularly well to poisoning, in particular because of the confinement imposed on the population. "The fact that individuals are at home, to consume a lot of screens, and a lot of social networks ... We have all the ingredients for the conspiracy to work", he points out to Europe 1.

### **d) The vaccine, or rather, vaccines**

Response measures have also been the manufacture of vaccines. It was the hard core of the politico-economic struggle of this pandemic. For lack of arbitration on the part of the World

Health Organization WHO, the powers have each manufactured their own vaccine and have done everything to impose it on their partners. Thus, China, the USA, England, etc. manufactured their vaccine and each of these countries did not mutually recognize these vaccines, this to the great displeasure of travelers who had to have more than one vaccine. And there an open economic war was unleashed and hit the Arab and African world. These powers competed ardently to provide/impose their vaccine. What kind of love from these people who a few months before through the WHO had announced a humanitarian disaster in Africa?

The war was not only limited to which vaccine is effective or not, but also to the variants of this pandemic.

Thus several variant cases have been put forward and solutions have been given each time by the person who had discovered this variant.

#### e) **Why did each power seek to manufacture its own vaccine?**

The world powers pose as rivals on the issue of anti-Covid vaccines, with national interests regaining the upper hand over multilateralism, however advocated by the WHO. And faced with Western countries withdrawing into themselves, Chinese "**soft power**" is weaving its web a little more.

In geopolitics, every opportunity is good to advance one's pawns. The Covid-19 health crisis, and in particular the race for vaccines, has proved it once again: questions of prestige, rivalry and "**soft power**" have prompted world powers to compete with each other rather than to work together. And there, national economic games come before global health issues.

The race was first to produce a vaccine, considered the miracle cure to end a pandemic that has plagued the world for more than a year. In this little game, the United States (Pfizer and Moderna vaccine), the United Kingdom (AstraZeneca vaccine), China (Sinopharm and Sinovac vaccines) and Russia (Sputnik-K vaccine) were the big winners. But the challenge, now, is to vaccinate its own population, and in this area, no one has succeeded in doing as well as Israel, of which a third of the population has already received at least one dose. Is it important at this time to find out, in the face of a global health crisis, the role and place of the WHO?

#### **f) Anti-covid vaccines: weapon of domination**

“With Israel, there is a real performance there. They certainly overpaid for the vaccine, but today they have the record for the vaccination rate. However, there were elections in Israel and for the Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu] , who was in difficulty on other subjects, it was necessarily a plus to be able to appear before the voters with a large proportion of the population already vaccinated”, underlines on France 24 Pascal Boniface, director of the Institute of international relations and strategic (Iris).

In fact, it was first of all a question for the States of responding to the demand of their own population. Whether they are in Israel, the United States or France, citizens around the world need reassurance and are eager for the restrictive measures that have disrupted their lives for months to end. The future of many leaders therefore depends on the ability to deliver vaccines and thus stem the spread of Covid-19 on its territory.

“The question of delivery has become a real political issue, confirms on France 24 Amandine Crespy, political scientist from the Free University of Brussels. Who says United Kingdom, says Brexit. So for Boris Johnson, it is essential to be in the lead of this vaccine race to show that even outside the European Union, the United Kingdom has lost none of its capacity for action and can activate levers to protect its population as well as possible, or even better than Brussels would do.”

#### **g) Covid: Spheres of influence rise from the ashes**

Beyond domestic political considerations, the geopolitics of the vaccine is redrawing fault lines that were thought to belong to the past. On the one hand, Western countries swear by their own vaccines and appropriate them. On the other, China and Russia are trying to compete with the Western powers.

“We can clearly see that this strategic rivalry has a flavour of the Cold War, judge Pascal Boniface. The fact that Russia called its vaccine ‘Sputnik’ is anything but a coincidence.

This recalls the 'Sputnik moment', when the Russians launched their own rocket into orbit in 1957, much to the surprise of the Americans, who believed for a moment that they were strategically downgraded by the Soviet Union.”

However, it is China that is doing the best. First economically, since among the major world economies, it is the only country to have experienced positive growth in 2020, above 2%. The slowdown in the US and European economies has led to more imports of Chinese-made products, resulting in record trade surpluses for Beijing of more than \$70 billion last November. It was ultimately the flip side. An economy to weaken at all costs but which continues to grow.

But it is essentially in the field of “soft power” that Beijing has taken full advantage of the health crisis by filling the void left by Westerners in developing countries. While the World Health Organization (WHO) had advocated equal access to vaccination for the whole world in the spring of 2020, creating the Covax mechanism to make this possible, it was indeed national interests that prevailed.

“We see that it is not WHO-style multilateralism that prevails, but rather everyone for themselves, analyzes Pascal Boniface. There is a quite visible North-South aspect. Whereas there was a discourse on the 'common good' vaccine, Westerners have bought 90% of the doses of the two American vaccines. This will leave traces and resentment in the countries of the South.”

Witness the recent statements of the South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, who openly criticized Westerners on Tuesday, January 26, 2021. “Rich countries have bought large doses of vaccines. The goal was to accumulate these vaccines and this is done at the expense of other countries in the world which need them most”, he lambasted.

"In its vaccine diplomacy, China has extremely important assets with several vaccines, considerable production capacities, vaccines that are sometimes easier to use and, above all, a very clear priority: to supply developing countries quickly enough”, explains on France 24 Antoine Bondaz, researcher at the Foundation for Strategic Research (FRS).

## **Conclusion**

The Covid 19 pandemic, a natural disaster or bacteriological weapon, has remained for Arab and African countries a sad reality of the powers which want to take Africa as an ideological battleground. The unipolar world and the Western political imagination design policies to be enforced in the dominated mode (Arab and African) without consultation or explanation.

The eastern world militant for a multipolar world governs this western world and is racing against time to the African and Arab world.

With the Covid pandemic, the Arab and African world as a whole has shown another side because they have not applied to the letter the dictates of these blocs which are rising from their ashes and want, like the years of the Cold War, to impose their world Vision.

Burundi has certainly observed the barrier measures adapted to the Burundian reality.

Containment not being possible, vaccination not being systematically possible, the test not being systematically feasible, Burundi has not made these measures compulsory but optional.

This attitude earned him the name of "bad student" as if there was the continuity of students and teachers, parents and children as it was in the time of colonization. There are other African countries which have just tried to apply these measures to please the metropolises. But these measures were more or less observed in the capitals because it was not possible to apply them in the villages.

## **Recommendations:**

### **a) To African and Arab governments**

- Adopt a common policy of regular consultations on health policy issues to make their voices heard at the WHO, which seems to be at the service of its major financiers;
- Put the necessary means into the development of traditional medicine, the only sure way to overcome health disasters instead of voting budgets for importing drugs and other medical tools;
- Set up think tanks to reflect and propose approaches to solutions to challenges related to paternalism, which does not say its name.

### **b) To developed countries**

- Stop always considering Arab and African countries as countries to be civilized whose peoples were taken as "big children";
- Review their paternalistic policy in favour of cooperation between equals;

- Let the WHO work as an agency of the Nations and not an agency of the powers

### **c) To the African and Arab peoples**

- Change mentalities and campaign much more for the decolonization of medicine;
- Revalorize Arab and African medicine and make it more than efficient to find African and Arab solutions linked to African and Arab realities

## **2. A war of civilizations and ideology**

The war in Ukraine seems to be a war which does not say its name. It broke out on February 24, 2022 with a Russian military offensive in Ukraine.

This war seemed to surprise Westerners who perhaps no longer thought of an armed international conflict on their territory. They were used to proxy wars, western attacks on African and Asian countries. We will remember Syria, Libya, Afghanistan, Iraq...

But then, why did Russia attack its former part of the USSR?

What are the root causes of this conflict?

What are the immediate causes of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict? What is the impact of this conflict on a global level?

What is the impact of this conflict on the level of the African world and the Arab world? What can be the position of these countries mentioned above?

These questions will help us to fully understand the contours of this conflict which tends at the ideological level to strengthen the old North-East blocs.

### **a) Distant origins of the conflict in Ukraine**

Ukraine was part of the former USSR. This part of the globe was the torchbearer of socialist, Marxist and communist ideology until 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The crisis between Russia and Ukraine took an important turn on Thursday, February 24, 2022 with the declaration of Russian President Vladimir Putin, the first bombings and the entry into Ukrainian soil of Russian armed forces from the east, south via Crimea and to the north via Belarus, an ally of Moscow. This entry into the war results from long months of tensions between the two countries, Russia not accepting the rapprochement of Ukraine with the Western democracies and even less his desire to join NATO, an unacceptable point for Vladimir Putin who sees it as a threat to his borders. Russia and Ukraine have a special bond. Ukraine was indeed one of the constituent entities of the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), until the dissolution of the latter in 1991 and the proclamation of Ukrainian

independence. However, Ukraine retains ties with Russia. In 2013, while a pro-Russian president was in office (Viktor Yanukovich), a revolution broke out in the country and ousted the head of state. A Western hand was behind with what the West has dubbed in several countries “the Orange Revolution”.

In repression, Vladimir Putin annexes Crimea, a Ukrainian territory. In the country, pro and anti-Russian clash. Then, Ukrainian separatists favourable to the neighbouring country took control, with the support of Russia, of part of the Dombass region, a coal basin made up of the oblasts (the equivalent of the regions in France) of Donetsk and Lugansk (in red on the map). Then, they self-proclaimed the People's Republic of Donetsk and that of Lugansk on about a third of each oblast. Historically, these are territories in which the Russian language and culture are steeped. It is therefore a subdivision of Donetsk and Luhansk oblast. The red dividing line on the OSCE map marks the boundary between pro-Russian separatists in the east and Ukrainian government-led territories in the west. To the east, the DPRs and the LPR are separated by their historical border (in grey).



On July 12, 2021, Vladimir Putin published a long text on the Kremlin website in which he returned to the history which has linked Russia and Ukraine for centuries. In his writings, the Russian president recalls that “Russians and Ukrainians were one people” in view of the history between the two nations. For him, the independence taken by the neighbouring country in 1991 “is our great misfortune and our great common tragedy”. A feeling reinforced with the reiterated will, in August 2021, of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenski to integrate NATO, and therefore move away a little more from Russia.

*“I cannot accept that we are not proposing an action plan for Ukraine's accession to NATO. The longer we wait, the more countries hesitate on this issue, and the more it confirms the influence of Russia on States at the economic, political level, as well as in terms of personal relations”*, he declared to several media, including Liberation.

For Russia, it is unacceptable to lose ideological influence over Ukraine, which, for ten years,

has shown its desire to join NATO, an organization based on Western ideology in eternal competition with Eastern one. Judeo-Christian civilization has dominated the world for two thousand years. Today, the Middle Eastern empire is trying to get rid of it. But the globalization imposed by the West does not want to let go. The Middle Eastern empire, on the other hand, is starting to pull its claws out.

President Putin has signed a decree signing the end of the use of the dollar as a global currency and the use of Swift in the transfer of money. It does not stop there because, there is now the BRICS which emerges and faces the UN, it looks like the UN bis.

The situation in Ukraine is precisely an example of a clash of civilizations; it can be seen as a clash of globalist and Eurasian civilizations. After the “great geopolitical catastrophe” (as the Russian president called the collapse of the USSR), the territories of the once united country became “borders” (intermediate zones). These spaces to which the attention of neighbours has increased, NATO and especially the United States were interested in destabilizing the situation on the borders of Russia. It is indeed this war of civilizations that is at stake here. In the 1990s, coherent work was initiated with the executives of the new governments of the new member states of the USSR. The events of 2014 in Ukraine, the Maidan, supported so fervently by both Nuland and the famous Bernard-Henri Levy, soldier of ultra-globalization, were a turning point; in fact they opened the door to the establishment of a direct globalist dictate on Ukraine. Moreover, liberal and nationalist elements, which were more or less neutral before 2014, have joined a united front with a globalist and pro-American agenda. For 8 years in Ukraine, Russophobia was cultivated by various programmes and history was rewritten, until physical massacre of Russians.

The West's unanimous support for Ukraine in 2022, the supply of weapons on an unthinkable scale lay bare this war of civilization. The agony of a globalist regime is beginning to lose ground in the face of multipolarity. The most significant pain is that Europe succumbed to the influence of globalist propaganda and instead of remaining neutral, it sided with war. In many ways, this was certainly the plan of the United States, which had so systematically and continuously provoked the entire conflict by injecting weapons into Ukraine. From the United States alone (according to Transparency International), more than \$658 million was invested in aid to Ukraine between 2014 and 2017.

At the same time, we see that the countries of Latin America, the Middle East, China and India

have not adopted a globalist position. Venezuelan leader Nicolas Maduro said his country "firmly" adheres to Russia's position. In Cuba, people were seen carrying Russian flags and Z symbols during a demonstration on May 1, recalls the German channel ZDF. Argentina accused the West of having double standards. In Brazil, presidential candidate Lula da Silva said in turn that Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky was responsible for what was happening in his country. China has spoken out against NATO expansion and US provocations. India has attempted to maintain its strategic neutrality (In the 1990s, India itself was the target of very painful US and Western sanctions for refusing to join the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty. The country, which the West seeks to cut off from its oxygen and deprive of high technology, then held its ground (largely thanks to cooperation with Russia, which did not associate itself with the sanctions and advocated their abolition). A number of Middle Eastern countries have backed Russia's special military operation (Syria, a longtime Russian ally, knows the battle against globalism better than anyone), calls for the withdrawal of the NATO are increasingly vocal in Turkey. Many African countries, especially those with strong anti-globalist sentiment, have not backed Western criticism of Russia (Mali, Sudan, Burundi , CAR, Zimbabwe, Republic of Congo, Eritrea). These reactions indicate the end of the myth of a "single world space and the birth of other poles of influence giving free rein to the multipolar world, enemy of the West". Russia's special military operation in Ukraine accelerated the formation of a multipolar world and catalyzed many geopolitical processes.

#### **b) The consequences of this war in Africa and the Arab world**

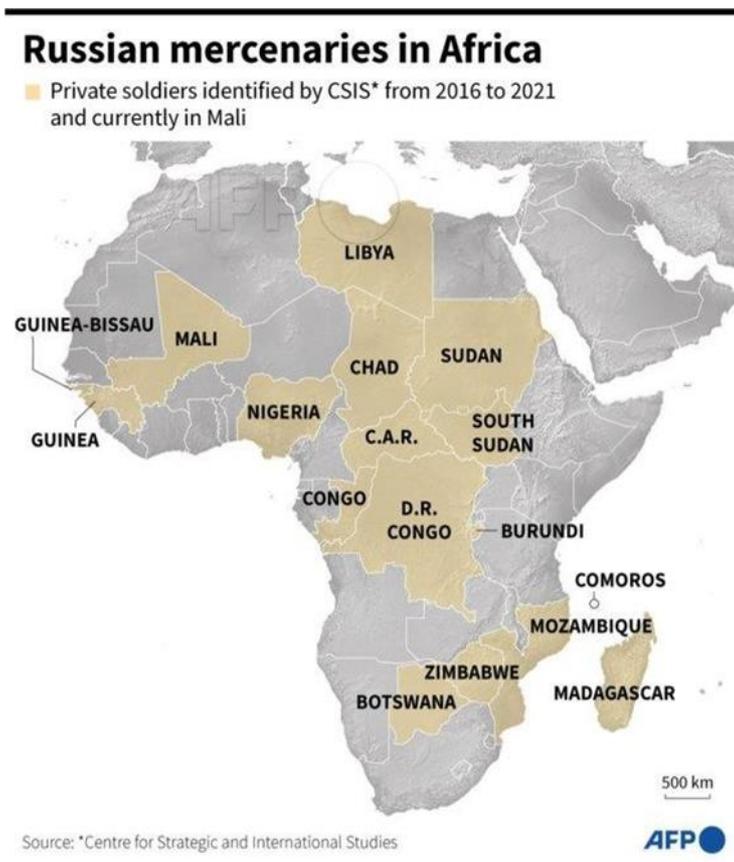
The political, social and economic consequences are numerous. At the political level, diplomatic brooms have been coming to the surface lately. The West is racing towards Africa and the Arab world to cut short the growing influence of the Middle Eastern empire.

This one does not let go of the ballast but strengthens its base in this part of the terrestrial globe. It is not a parental love but the desire to keep a monopoly on the riches of these two worlds.

How does this globe behave in relation to this paternalistic attitude?

*The abstention of several African states during the vote at the UN General Assembly on March 2, 2022 to adopt a resolution which "demands that Russia immediately cease the use of force against Ukraine" has raised questions. Also how is the war perceived on the continent and the Arab world? Should we read it in the light of a supposed return of Russian influence when we observe an expansion of Russia on the politico-military level? And what is the impact of the*

*Russian-Ukrainian war, particularly on the issue of food security?*



It is said that « the story of the antelope is always written by the lion who ate it »

This map reflects a certain discomfort and disappointment on the part of the designer. When there is military cooperation between Russia and the rest of the world, they are said to be mercenaries. And when there is a French or American military base, we talk about military cooperation

At the social level, the West came to Africa especially with the Judeo-Christian civilization more than in the Arab world which tried to resist. The consequences on this point will not be quick but they will certainly be there. One thing is noticeable about this social civilization: Africans tend to favour the language of the colonizer, to value Western culture going hand in hand with Western consumption.

At the economic level, the consequences are already perceptible, as the Ivorian newspaper writes (africa-press, 18/3/2022). *“Inflation is the main risk of war in Ukraine. (...) For African countries that are net importers of food, there will be a direct consequence on food security and consumer prices”*, warns Aroni Chaudhuri, economist at Coface. The situation is particularly alarming for wheat, thirty-two countries importing more than 90% of their consumption. There is also the lack of fuel which affects our countries, including the Arab countries, even though they are among the major producers of this black gold. Many are also very dependent on imports of refined oil, the price of which has exploded. Some hydrocarbon-producing countries will be able to benefit from a windfall effect, but it promises to be limited. *“When a country does not have the capacity to produce fuel, it must import it. For example, 18% of Nigeria’s imports are refined oil, even though it is the continent’s leading oil producer,”* the economist said.

In addition to these economic issues, Africa and the Arab world risk finding themselves increasingly caught up in the war of influence between Moscow and Western states. In recent years, Russia has repositioned itself on the African continent, in Arab countries, in particular through military partnerships. *“A tenth power iron curtain rises between Europe and Russia,”* says Arnaud Kalika, who leads a seminar on Russia at the National Conservatory of Arts and Crafts. And Africa is becoming an extremely important square on the world chessboard. »

This attitude can be explained by the continent’s extreme dependence on the external environment, the fragility of bilateral relations and the instability of the international system. But the disruption of our world, partly reflected in the war in Ukraine, calls for a profound rethinking of African and Arab diplomacy. Indeed, both politically and in the economic and military fields, Africa and the Arab world occupy a vulnerable position, the hegemonic struggles between the great powers being expressed there with more violence than elsewhere. And the debates aroused by the Russian presence in certain African and Arab countries actually testify to a rivalry between the West and Moscow on the one hand and the Eastern world on the other, which will not be without consequence on the political future of the African and Arab societies.

For reasons of geographical proximity, the West cannot remain indifferent to the extension of Russian influence in Africa and the Arab world through Russian politico-military activities. The error, for African governments, would consist in remaining in a logic of subordination obliging

them to choose one power rather than another.

A real policy of sovereignty in terms of security and defense must be built. And this requires a reassessment of existing tools at the levels of the African Union, the Arab League and the Regional Economic Communities.

### **c) Attitude of African and Arab countries towards this war of “civilization”**

During the vote on sanctions against Russia last March, the Arab and African countries in general surprised the world and disappointed the West to the point of being angry, as expressed by the French President.

Abstention is a political message. It is polysemic and must therefore be analyzed on a case-by-case basis. The non-alignment of emerging and developing countries cannot be invoked here, because that would mean that there is an ideology or at the very least an agreement between the various African countries which have abstained. While it should be recalled that the majority of African countries voted to condemn the Russian intervention in Ukraine, abstention must be deciphered in the light of a situation of distrust of Western powers and/or diplomatic calculations linked to military and/or economic arithmetic (partnerships with Russia, China and/or Western countries) which seem to show the prevalence of the defense of national interests. The abstention of Senegal, rather classified in the “camp” of the democracies, amazed. Several hypotheses have been put forward such as that of a precaution one year after the anti-French demonstrations. These internal questions are probably not to be weighed down. However, given the presidency of Macky Sall at the head of the African Union, and undoubtedly informed of the contrasting positions of his peers, it is more likely that he wished to maintain diplomatic cohesion in order to move forward on priority projects unique to the African continent. He, however, condemned, in the strongest terms, the racism perpetrated against African students prevented from leaving Ukraine as refugees yet granted to Ukrainians on the specious grounds put forward by some Westerners that civilizational proximity would be greater with the Ukrainians. This arbitration of (in) elegance by Westerners will undoubtedly leave traces in the structuring of future power relations.

Finally, some countries were able to abstain or not vote, because they did not feel concerned. With regard to the French-speaking member countries of the OIF who abstained at the UN on March 2 and without knowing the details of the vote which is not public, we observe that on

March 16, meeting in the French-speaking Ministerial Conference (CMF), a resolution was adopted by consensus which condemns “with vigor and in the strongest terms the military aggression against Ukraine by the Russian Federation and condemns the resulting violations of international law, human rights and humanitarian law, including violation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine”.

And there, there is a very important detail: the UN proceeded by vote, and this meeting proceeded by consensus. This resolution may appear contradictory with the vote at the UN on March 1st; it reflects a process of geopolitical re-compositions in progress, the lines of which are not yet clearly defined.

As for Eritrea, subject to US sanctions since the fall of 2021 for its role in the war in Ethiopia and which has moved closer to Russia, its firm position and therefore its refusal not to condemn the Russian intervention in Ukraine is a bias against the Washington and ultimately in favour of Moscow.

But by choosing not to choose, the African countries, far from supporting the war, intend to preserve a depolarized foreign policy, interacting on multiple poles of power, whether Western, Russian or even Chinese.

*The newspaper “Jeune Afrique (of 16/3/2022) speaking about the war in Ukraine, calls on Africa to learn to stand on its own two feet. Faced with the geopolitical upheavals caused by the war in Ukraine, the continent cannot remain in a logic of subordination obliging it to choose one power over another. It must bring out an African foreign policy.*

President Putin, for his part, did not mince words on 23/2/2022 when he called for a geopolitical reconfiguration of the post-Cold War international order, which would result in a reduction of the “grip of the Western camp” on the world. For him, the first countries targeted by this repositioning strategy will be the United States and Europe, true defenders of Judeo-Christian civilization and globalization.

### **General conclusion**

Adding to the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the war launched by Vladimir Putin against Ukraine is already having a major negative impact on the progress of the world. And it is likely to have it even more in the future. The consequences of both the pandemic and the war

against Ukraine are indeed much greater in the countries of the South than in the rich countries. These two crises combined in a very short time called into question the slow movement of convergence in living standards on a global scale observed for several decades. Westerners must be aware of the major geopolitical risks associated with this trend reversal and act to limit them. In the difficult context in which they find themselves, it is not certain however that they have the means or in any case the political will.

The war on Ukraine is causing what is known as global “stagflation,” combining high inflation and economic stagnation, even recession. That situation had not been seen since the 1970s. It was accompanied in fact by a rapid and brutal rise in inflation under the pressure of the rise in the prices of foodstuffs, energy and of the main raw materials. Admittedly, inflation had already increased throughout 2021 due to the increase in demand caused by the post-COVID-19 economic recovery and the persistent disruptions in many supply chains following the pandemic. However, it has accelerated markedly since the outbreak of war in Ukraine. And even more in the countries of the South than in the developed countries.

#### **d) General recommendations**

##### **1) To African and Arab countries**

- Rethink the international policy adapted to the current global context;
- Take the proactive initiative to improve diplomatic relations with the powers;
- Invest in research first of the past, then for the future in order to build an African and Arab world designed on the improved model of these two worlds to avoid exoticism without a better future;
- Do everything possible to weigh on the international chessboard by exploiting as the father of the family the rich subsoil, the soil and the mild climate in the production of food able to feed the whole world;
- Learn to give real value to African and Arab products by consuming and exporting them;
- Refuse that the African and Arab world be the dumping ground for Western industries;
- Become aware of the concepts of political, economic and socio-cultural independence;
- Effectively trigger the process of decolonization which still weighs on this world.

##### **2) To world powers**

- Stop infantilizing the African and Arab world;

- To give the same value of human rights to the North, to the East as to the South;
- Stop stoking the racism imported by colonization;
- Recognize the crimes resulting from colonization;
- Commit to repair the harm caused by colonization, proxy wars.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION**